



Sexual Harassment

Module VIII

What you will learn in this module

- What is sexual harassment.
- Some circumstances of sexual harassment.
- Steps to prevent sexual harassment.
- What to do when an incident occurs.
- Examples of sexual harassment.

What is sexual harassment?

- Unwelcome sexual advances.
- Requests for sexual favors.
- Other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

These apply to the following situations:
(cont.)

What is sexual harassment?

(cont.)

- Submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's:
 - Employment,
 - Work Performance or
 - Creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Legal considerations

The Supreme Court recognizes that sexual harassment:

- Does not have to be actual physical conduct
- Is not limited to female victims
- Can occur among same-sex employees
- Is not limited to supervisor-employee

What are some circumstances of sexual harassment?

- The victim or the harasser may be a woman or a man.
- The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, an agent of the employer, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or a non-employee.
- The victim does not have to be the person harassed but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.
- The harasser's conduct must be unwelcome.

Examples.....

Clearly S.H. Behavior

- Asking for sexual favors in return for employment rewards
- Threats if sexual requests are not provided
- Sexually explicit pictures
- Grabbing private body parts
- Forced kissing
- Sexual assault or rape
- Sexually explicit remarks
- Obscene letter or comments

Potential S.H. behavior

- Violating personal space
- Foul language
- Body language, posturing or gesturing sexually
- Sexually aggressive touching
- Whistles or cat calls
- Lewd, off color jokes
- Licking lips or blowing kisses
- Leering, winking or staring

What do district boards need to do to ensure sexual harassment does not occur?

- Discuss the subject at board meetings.
- Establish a zero-tolerance policy.
- Ensure employees know how to deal with and report sexual harassment.
- Consider training on the subject for employees and board members.

If allegations of sexual harassment are made:

- Intervene in a timely and effective manner and monitor the situation.
- Get professional assistance.
- Maintain confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.
- Never retaliate.
- Do not make judgments.
- Document, document, document.

Sample sexual harassment policy:

The Happy County Conservation District believes that employees have the right to work in an environment free of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is a form of misconduct that undermines the employment relationship. No employee, either male or female, should be subjected verbally or physically to unsolicited and unwelcome sexual overtures or conduct. Anyone engaging in harassing conduct will be subject to discipline, ranging from a warning to termination.

Review Questions:

1. Brushing your arm against another persons body can be sexual harassment. True or False?
2. The victim does not have to be the person harassed but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct. True or False?

Review Questions:

3. When a sexual harassment incident is reported it is best to wait a few weeks for the harasser to apologize and then forget about the incident. True or False?
4. Telling a joke with sexual content is sexual harassment if overheard by an offended employee? True or False?

Answers to Review Questions:

1. Brushing your arm against another persons body can be sexual harassment. True or False?

True

2. The victim does not have to be the person harassed but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct. True or False?

True

Answers to Review Questions (cont.)

3. When a sexual harassment incident is reported it is best to wait a few weeks for the harasser to apologize and then forget about the incident. True or False?

False – action should be taken immediately

3. Telling a joke with sexual content is sexual harassment if overheard by an offended employee? True or False?

True

Summary

Conservation district boards can not allow sexual harassment or other misconduct to occur in the district office. All board members and employees should have a good understanding of what constitutes sexual harassment and know how to deal with such situations.

Resources Available

- **Resources**
 - Conservation District Handbook
 - Kansas Human Rights Commission
- **Where to find**
 - Located in each district office
 - <http://www.khrc.net/>